Harrisburg Jury Selection to Begin

By Betty Medsger
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HARRISBURG, Pa., Jan. 24 —The trial of seven antiwar activists opened here today amid tight security precautions and the establishment of guidelines for the selection of the 12-member jury.

At the outset of his remarks to the 144 persons who responded to the jury call, U.S. District Judge R. Dixon Herman predicted that the trial would last "several" months and that the jury would be sequestered for the duration.

The defendants are charged with conspiracy to kidnap presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger, to blow up tunnels under federal buildings in Washington and to raid federal offices in several cities. An eighth defendant, Theodore Glick, will have a separate trial.

Of the 175 persons called to serve on the jury, 31 were excused earlier and another 61 were excused today because of hardship or prejudicial opinions about the case, leaving 83 prospective jurors to be questioned by prosecution and defense atorneys.

The questioning of the first 46 prospective jurors is to begin Tuesday. In an unusual action, Judge Herman said today that if the news media reports the names of prospective jurors or the questions asked then he would probably prevent press coverage of the jury selection process.

The judge is expected to announce Tuesday whether the jury will be sequestered. The defendants have asked that the jurors not be sequestered. At a press conference one of the defendants, Eqbal Ahmad, said:

"It's going to be a long trial. The government presents its cases at the beginning when the jury is fresh. We present ours at the end when they are tired. We do not want them to resent us more because of the length of the trial."

U. S. marshals were on patrol throughout the federal building today. A glass and metal partition had been built in the first floor hallway to funnel those going to the trial to a single elevator. Those going to the trial may enter from only one side of the building and are searched as they enter. Bags are searched. General Service Administration personnel roam through the building equipped with walkie-talkies.

Associated Press

Father Philip Berrigan leaves county prison in Harrisburg for start of trial.

The first day of the trial began with an early morning antiwar press conference and rally during which 10 local residents put pieces of Selective Service files and draft cards in a black coffin that was later carried to the federal building by members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

Those who deposited the pieces of paper said they did not know the sources of their documents but called their action "nonviolent resistance." Most of the names on the documents had Philadelphia or New York addresses.

JUDGE R. DIXON HERMAN
...tough court rules

At the press conference to announce support for the defendants were Anthony Russo, recently indicted with Daniel Ellsberg in the Pentagon papers case; Carlos Feliciano, a Puerto Rican "Independista" recently charged with bombing 35 public buildings; Michael Ferber, a Harvard professor convicted and later acquitted in the 1968 case against Dr. Benjamin Spock, and four others charged with conspiracy against the selective Service system; and Howard Zinn, a professor at Boston University, and Richard Falk, professor at Princeton University, both recently subpoenaed by a federal grand jury in Boston investigating the dispersal of the Pentagon papers to the press.

The Rev. Philip Berrigan, a defendant already serving a prison sentence for earlier conviction for destruction of Selective Service records, told Associated Press in a brief courtroom interview that he had enaged in discussions "to investigate the feasibility" of various protect actions, including kidnaping.

"I've been in federal buildings all over the East Coast checking them out," said Father Berrigan, according to the AP.

Harrisburg defendants Sister Elizabeth McAlister, the Rev. Joseph Wenderoth and the Rev. Neil McLaughlin.